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George Wethering  
with the regards of

Arlo Bates.

March, 1888.



## SONNETS IN SHADOW.



# SONNETS IN SHADOW.

ARLO BATES.



BOSTON:  
ROBERTS BROTHERS.

1887.



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*H. L. V. B.*



I.

*MOST lives are like or tree or shrub or weed,  
And slow or swift to flower and fruitage grow;  
Or, broken ere their prime, forlornly show  
But blighted bud, promise of fruit or seed.*

*Not so was thine, nor such excuse did need.  
Thy life was like a crystal, perfect so  
Whene'er growth ended. Time could but bestow  
More space to prove worth still by newer deed.*

*Like a rare gem where richest star-fires play,  
Flashing a hundred tinted flames, which yet  
Is white and lucent as the drop which day*

*With its first burning sunbeam touches, set  
Upon the tip of some fresh hawthorn spray,—  
Such was thy life; so rich, so pure alway.*



## II.

*AND yet not so; since cold the reddest fire  
Ever from diamond or dew-drop burned;  
While what sweet warmth and ardor are inurned  
Where thou art laid, might tell nor pen nor lyre.*

*One sits by his lone hearth, and sees mount higher  
The flame toward which of old two faces turned;  
Most like it is the spirit which sojourned  
Awhile beside it. When it shall expire,*

*To what cold dust its cinders fall amain.  
What cheer and sense of home while it endure;  
What desolation waiting on its wane!*

*How perfect joy thy presence did insure;  
How hopeless life without thee, and how vain;  
The flame once sped, the ashes are so poor!*



## SONNETS IN SHADOW.

---

I.

I.

AFTER fate smites, the heart at first is dumb,  
And neither feels nor can believe its woe.

Then past the torpid soul the gray days go,  
And lay their curious fingers, chill and numb,

Upon its wounds, till pain has reached its sum,

And the soul cries in agony ; while slow

And unreal as the shapes that visions show

The stealthy days glide on, until is come

Some dreadful morn that with its mocking sneer

Gives full assurance, and the spirit there

Yields up at last even the right to fear.

No more it recks if life be foul or fair,

Or cries, " This cannot be ! " but sitteth drear,

Owning, " It is ! " calm in its blank despair.



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*SONNETS IN SHADOW.*

II.

LITTLE by little, as some down-trod weed  
    Leaf after leaf lifts painfully again,  
    Does life renew its uses. Though remain  
Desire nor hope, though every heart-wound bleed,

Nature's high law no mortal may impede  
    In its remorseless working. Wholly vain  
    Protest or strife ; we to obey are fain,  
Slaves of strong destiny in thought and deed.

As those whom destiny compels, we take  
    One after one all life's old duties up ;  
Its cares and fears, its terror and its ache ;

Even its joys, though each, an empty cup  
    Where once was wine, but serves the thought  
        to wake  
Of draught divine we once did from it sup.



*SONNETS IN SHADOW.*

II.

I.

WHAT is this monstrous thing called death?  
What plea  
Within the universe can justify  
Its presence? How can even one man die  
Nor yet the world to utter ruin be

Hurled instantly? Creatures of nothing, we  
Raise all our outraged souls in one fierce cry  
Against such wrong ; defiant, lift on high  
Our empty arms, that men and gods may see

What has befallen ! Though most impotent  
Our protest be ; though all the powers whose hate  
Still wreaks itself on hapless man be bent

To crush our hearts with woes unmitigate,  
For justice will we clamor, vehement,  
Against this crime unspeakable of fate !



*SONNETS IN SHADOW.*

II.

WAS it for this that love was given man,  
As to the tortured wretch they would not kill,  
Stretched on the rack, to keep him living still  
Inquisitors dole scanty drops? The plan

Infernal craft devised, lest when to ban  
By death it sought, it bless against its will!  
Were love unknown, who could find death an ill,  
Or fail to bless the shortening of life's span?

As wind-dried leaves crushed in a giant hand  
Our hearts are broken by malignant fate.  
The spring of love that made them once expand

But nourished them to feed immortal hate.  
Oh, woe, that even love was only planned  
To serve a cruelty insatiate!



*SONNETS IN SHADOW.*

III.

OF what avail is it with death to chide?  
Can deepest anguish move the stubborn fates?  
Or good or evil for each mortal waits  
Whether we pray or curse or passive bide.

Yet when the grave-sods our beloved hide,  
Our being all its powers dedicates  
To wring from that dread hand which arbitrates,  
Some miracle return them to our side.

The whole sad soul dissolves into a prayer  
So mighty that it seems it could not fail.  
The eager spirit searches everywhere

For avenues by which heaven to assail.  
We lose all self in plea beyond compare ; —  
And yet, of what avail, of what avail !





*SONNETS IN SHADOW.*

IV.

**H**OW dreadful is the languor of the soul  
Which neither hopes nor fears, which has no care  
For great or small ; indifferent how fare  
Alike the highway's dusts, the stars that roll.

When death takes love he takes at once the whole  
Life has of worth. Thereafter earth nor air  
Nor pearl-rich sea can longer anywhere  
Give to the desolate or joy or dole.

If it be morn or noon or amber eve,  
If sun or moon or cloud possess the sky,  
If foes be kind, if trusted friends deceive,

If fortune load with gifts or pass us by, —  
What does it matter? What should glad or grieve  
Now that indifferent the loved doth lie?



*SONNETS IN SHADOW.*

V.

I.

THERE is such power even in smallest things  
To bring the dear past back ; a flower's tint,  
A snatch of some old song, the fleeting glint  
Of sunbeams on the wave, — each vivid brings

The lost days up, as from the idle strings  
Of wind-harp sad a breeze evokes the hint  
Of antique tunes. A glove which keeps imprint  
Of a loved hand the heart with torture wrings

By memory of a clasp meant more than speech ;  
A face seen in the crowd with curve of cheek  
Or sweep of eyelash our woe's core can reach.

How strong is love to yearn and yet how weak  
To strive with fate, the lesson all things teach,  
As of the past in myriad ways they speak.



*SONNETS IN SHADOW.*

II.

DEATH so brings all life's standards unto naught  
That joy, in dismal paradox, brings pain,  
And sorrow pleasure ; joy is void and vain  
When it but stabs the heart with bitter thought

Of one who may not share it. Woe is fraught  
At least with the remembrance that this bane  
Hurts not the dead, till we, heart-sick, are fain  
Give thanks that death to them has respite brought ;

While joy so cruel is, no pang is spared  
In memories of bliss our hearts have known.  
Bitter it is to bear a grief unshared ;

But bitterer to meet our joys alone.  
Once only for the bliss of life we cared ;  
In desolation bliss makes sharpest moan.



*SONNETS IN SHADOW.*

VI.

WE know the tales of death, whose measures run  
On drownèd sailors, lying lank and chill  
Under the sirupy green wave ; and still,  
White maids, to whose beds fleshless death has won,

Instead of love ; the fair, pale bride undone  
By the dread ravisher, while yet no ill  
Had marred her joy ; dotards whose years fulfil  
A century, to end as they begun :

But who of all the dead is dead to us  
Until fate smites our own? Or maid or bride,  
Dotard or mariner, though dolorous

His dying be, 't is as a dream beside  
The fiery reality when thus  
Death's very self enters where we abide.





*SONNETS IN SHADOW.*

VII.

**I**F it should be we are watched unaware  
By those who have gone from us ; if our sighs  
Ring in their ears ; if tears that scald our eyes  
They see and long to stanch ; if our despair

Fills them with anguish, — we must learn to bear  
In strength of silence. Howso doubt denies  
It cannot give assurance which defies  
All peradventure ; and if anywhere

Our loved grieve with our grieving, cruel we  
To cherish selfishness of woe. The chance  
Should keep us steadfast. Tortured utterly,

This hope alone in all the world's expanse  
We clutch forlornly ; how deep love can be,  
Grief's silence proving more than utterance.



*SONNETS IN SHADOW.*

VIII.

HOW absolute the solitude death brings.  
Though by the heartless insolence of fate  
Life still goes on ; though friends compassionate  
About us throng, — the heart so strongly clings

Unto the past's perfect companionings  
That all the world seems void and desolate.  
Once e'en the waste we walked in kingly state  
Since our loved shared in thought our journeyings :

Now vacant are alike the thronging street  
And those familiar rooms where memory  
Pictures that presence still which used to greet

Our steps returning. Empty utterly  
The universe for us, if faith, more fleet  
Than doubt, outrun not cold uncertainty.



*SONNETS IN SHADOW.*

IX.

EVER for consolation grief is told  
How worse might be, and woe be heaped on woe,—  
As if the present pain were softened so,  
Made less by fancied evils manifold.

Would the impoverished diver be consoled,  
When from his hand the pearl, like melting snow,  
Slips to plunge darkling in the tide below,  
That the void shell has not escaped his hold?

When love has from our longing arms been torn,  
What boots it if the empty world we grasp?  
To those who this supreme bereavement mourn

It little matters what woe follows fast!  
The worst that fate can do already borne,  
The very meaning of such dread is past.



*SONNETS IN SHADOW.*

**X.**

ONE might endure the day, wear out the night ;  
It is the morning hour that wrings the heart, —  
When from fair dreams that lulled our pain we start,  
And find the world dissolved in misty light,

While far aloof the day-star glitters bright,  
As 't were the loved one's soul which draws apart  
From whispering us in sleep. How keen the smart  
Of meeting life afresh, the bitter fight

With grief renewing ; while, glad with the day,  
The birds sing in sheer bliss to be alive,  
The wingèd breeze crisps the trees into spray

Of verdant waves that lisp like wort-rubbed hive  
Of gold-girt bees ; and night we cannot stay,  
Or hush the jocund noise, howe'er we strive !





*SONNETS IN SHADOW.*

XI.

I.

THE best of friends, if fate their ways doth part,  
Grow strange through severance of their daily round.

New interests hold them ; one by one are found  
Hopes they share not together ; and though heart

To heart still cling, no longer the same smart  
They feel, no more with the same joyance bound.

The union once like concord of sweet sound  
Does separation mar with cunning art.

When this we note, the bitter doubt is born  
If death's division shall work ruin so  
In love's communion ; if each weary morn

Finds us remoter from the heart we know.  
Ah, cruel fate, if e'en the hope forlorn  
Of unseen friendship needs must fail our woe !



*SONNETS IN SHADOW.*

II.

WHATEVER faith believe, still is out-run  
This pleasant earth-life which love made so sweet.  
Though we again in other worlds shall meet,  
This joyousness forevermore is done.

Life there may be more fair ; more bright the sun,  
More fragrant meads in which shall stray our feet,  
Love's blisses linger long and sorrows fleet ;  
But howso rich in joys that future, none

Can soothe our present pain, when hand seeks hand  
And finds it not ; when that dear voice is stilled  
Scarce needed word to make us understand

The heart's best secrets ; when that smile which filled  
The world with light, the glance which could command  
Our soul's best use, relentless fate has chilled.



*SONNETS IN SHADOW.*

XII.

THOUGH faith be dead, yet will our hope outrun  
Even the grave's doubt with triumphant might,  
To reach some Devachan forever bright  
Where all earth's wrong and anguish are undone ;

Where as some awful star, dual though one, —  
Two throbbing heart-fires in one sphere of light, —  
Does soul with soul belovèd so unite  
As they had ne'er been two since time begun.

What were the clasp of hand by hand, of eye  
The glance to eye, even of lip on lip  
The holy rapture, with such bliss to vie?

Ah, though this be illusion fate will strip  
Full soon, an hour it lifts us to the sky,  
And with the gods gives us full fellowship !



*SONNETS IN SHADOW.*

XIII.

I.

WHEN from all smallest trifles we have spun  
Those threads as strong as steel, though cobweb  
fine,

Which bind us each to each, and thus divine  
Made homely cares, to know such living done

Brings weariness of all beneath the sun.

Infinite tasks are now those toils combine  
To make our days ; we hate those coils intwine  
To hamper, when we swift life's course would run.

All duties, howe'er dull, we patient bore,

Since their use served our love ; but now they tease  
Our very soul with importunings sore.

Even the stripes of fate sting less than these

Gnat-bites of circumstance, which evermore  
Rankle with venom nothing can appease.



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*SONNETS IN SHADOW.*

II.

YET is there blessing even in the fret  
Of petty tasks, their ministry to save  
The thoughts from deeps of woe, as from the wave  
Thorns lift the wretch who, falling, holds them yet

Despite their sting. A moment we forget  
Our grief for teasing cares ; as to a slave  
A queen might give a thought denied the brave,  
Since on her path intrusive feet he set.

When all life's bliss could the bereavèd heart  
From its deep, brooding woe never beguile,  
The homely round of life draws us apart

From sorrow's drear absorption, and awhile  
We are unconscious of the burning smart.  
Toil only life and grief can reconcile.



*SONNETS IN SHADOW.*

XIV.

**I**T is to-morrow and to-morrow still,  
And yet again to-morrow that our peace  
Shall come once more ; that time shall bring surcease  
From pain, and rest the yearning bosom fill ;

While ever is to-day a brooding ill  
Which shuts us in : and life finds no release  
From its numb ache and terror, while decrease,  
To fight despair, the energy and will.

To-morrow, still to-morrow, while to-day  
Ever of waning hope tells by its gloom.  
That sweet mirage, to-morrow, fades away

Till it is distant as the morn of doom.  
We chase it alway with no power to stay,  
Since there is no to-morrow save the tomb.



*SONNETS IN SHADOW.*

XV.

WITH dulcimer, citole, and psaltery,  
Tabor and pipe, and all the gauds of joy,  
Has Love been painted, a soft, wanton boy  
Dear to the nymphs and satyrs rude with glee.

They who in sorrow sit more truthfully  
Know Love the sable-winged, strong to destroy  
All life's illusions ; mighty to employ  
The soul's best powers ; noble, pure, and free.

The rosy cherubs, like light butterflies,  
Vanish with gloom ; while night with flame enspheres  
The love which is immortal whoso dies.

He shows the soul the angels as its peers ;  
Above the present bids the thought arise ;  
And slakes the heart's thirst from his cup of tears.



*SONNETS IN SHADOW.*

XVI.

EVER is new, however old, despair.  
The weary toiler to his load, the nun  
To her strait cell, grow wonted ; one by one  
We tire of joys and wear out all things fair.

But sorrow is immortal. From the glare  
Of flames it seems to die in, toward the sun  
It springs new-born, its Phoenix-course to run.  
Its blight and shadow follow everywhere,

Fire in hot, blinding day, but double gloom  
In darksome night. Where may one flee or hide  
From its approach, as terrible as doom?

In all the shores found by the searching tide  
There is no hope, save it be in the tomb, —  
Oh, do our loved in safety there abide?





*SONNETS IN SHADOW.*

XVII.

I.

AS flower-soft Moorish girls, who circling dance  
Like dusky moths about the torch's flame ;  
Or as fierce bearded Goths no man might tame,  
Striking their clanging shields with brazen lance,

Once memories came, desire's impassioned trance  
Awaking, or inspiring thirst for fame.

But where we sit to weep, with steps of shame,  
In charnel cerements wound, they now advance

Like shapes dragged from their tombs. However fair  
They once have been, the grave-taint mars them all ;  
Their hollow tones are keyed but to despair.

Could we forget when on the coffin fall  
The leaden clods, time might our woe outwear :  
Would God that memory shared the loved one's pall !



*SONNETS IN SHADOW.*

II.

YET loss were double loss did we forget.  
Who once has loved begrudges not to pay,  
Since needs must be, with ache of heart alway  
For love's divine ; and thus the seal is set

That marks his passion true. The sun lives yet,  
When night's black ruin has o'erwhelmed the day ;  
And death, which claims the loved one, cannot slay  
Love, the immortal. Are not our eyes wet?

If we no longer loved why should we weep?  
Since still we love, we bless that memory  
Which makes love possible and strong and deep.

Bitter the fruit we pluck from memory's tree,  
And yet its acrid husks a kernel keep  
Sweeter than honey of Hymettian bee.



*SONNETS IN SHADOW.*

XVIII.

**L**IKE to a coin, passing from hand to hand,  
Are common memories, and day by day  
The sharpness of their impress wears away.  
But love's remembrances unspoiled withstand

The touch of time, as in an antique land  
Where some proud town old centuries did slay,  
Intaglios buried lie, still in decay  
Perfect and precious spite of grinding sand.

What fame or joy or sorrow has been ours,  
What we have hoped or feared, we may forget.  
The clearness of all memory time deflours,

Save that of love alone, persistent yet  
Though sure oblivion all things else devours,  
Its tracings firm as when they first were set.



*SONNETS IN SHADOW.*

XIX.

IN our remembrances one poignant thought  
Will haunt us still, as may some single note  
Wail from the horns, then murmur from the throat  
Of hautboys sad, and yet again be caught

By shrilling viols, with all passion fraught ;  
Now high, now low, now near, and now remote,  
Over the tide of sound seeming to float,  
As all without that tone must come to naught.

How deep is woe if memory's key-note be  
Not sweet, but sad with wrong's remembered ache-  
Lost joy we weep, but what repentant plea

From memory of wrong the sting can take !  
The weight of grief may not crush utterly,  
But with remorse the bravest heart must break.





*SONNETS IN SHADOW.*

XX.

I.

DEATH in its amber sets the happy past  
With all its colors fair, like those bright flies  
That sunned their wings beneath the young world's  
skies,  
And still shine gem-like long as time shall last.

Sorrows that might their shadow on love cast,  
Doubts that might blight, or griefs that might arise,  
Can mar it not. Safely enshrined it lies,  
Perfect forever, all its beauties fast.

Though this be all, still is it much to hold  
The consolation of remembrance pure,  
That cannot fade, or alter or wax old :

If this be earnest of some future sure,  
In what winged words can its high worth be told !  
Till all be known, our hearts can but endure.



*SONNETS IN SHADOW.*

II.

**I**F like the torch flame which some Druid hoar  
Quenched in a sacrifice, the spirit dies  
When sense and seeing from the well-loved eyes  
Fade utterly, and every empty shore

In all the desolate universe evermore  
Even to search of God himself denies  
Its shape or being, what can heart devise  
Of hope or comfort for its anguish sore ?

There is no comfort save the bitter thought.  
That we at least alone our sorrow bear ;  
That if the soul for which we yearn is naught,

It cannot writhe in ever fresh despair  
That we are parted ; and that death has wrought  
On us alone this hurt beyond repair.



*SONNETS IN SHADOW.*

XXI.

OF all the myriad ways which lead to Hell  
The lowest deep seeks that through Paradise.  
For every by-gone bliss we must the price  
Of agony with no abatement tell.

Of each dear love Fate keeps the tally well,  
And scores the cost with an exactness nice  
Beyond a Shylock's reckoning. No device  
Can cheat her avarice. The Sisters sell,

Not give, their boons ; and dearly all men pay  
To utmost farthing for what seems a gift.  
Yet when grief brings of settlement the day,

The heart none of its load of debt would shift ;  
Though sold to be the slave of woe alway,  
In love it glories at its own unthrift.



*SONNETS IN SHADOW.*

XXII.

HOW can we call this love which selfishly  
Mourns its own pain? Surely if love were true,  
So would it fill the soul as to undo  
All thought of self, how sharp soe'er pain be.

How fares it with our dear loved dead, while we  
Are torn with anguish? Do they suffer too,  
Thus to be parted? Does each morn anew  
Wake them to sorrow fresh ; each even see

Them faint with separation's pain intense?  
How poor is love, when baffled thus we moan  
And reach them not, even by subtlest sense ;

And poorer far, when our own woe alone  
Stifes the heart into indifference,  
Forgets to shudder at their griefs unknown.





*SONNETS IN SHADOW.*

XXIII.

WHO has not, smiling, in some happiest day, —  
Trifling with pain because so perfect seemed  
The present joy, the foolish heart esteemed  
It wise fate's jealousy thus to allay, —

Said, "Love, should we be parted!" and straightway  
Such stab of anguish felt, it might be deemed  
Already loss had come. Yet who has dreamed,  
Even with eyes dimmed so, what keen dismay

And burning, blighting sorrow death can bring?  
"Should we be parted!" murmur loving lips,  
But loving hearts still to the faith will cling

That parting cannot be; until death strips  
All its illusions from it, swallowing  
Comfort and faith alike in bleak eclipse.



*SONNETS IN SHADOW.*

XXIV.

I.

WHEN two souls have been truly blent in one,  
It could not chance that one should cease to be  
And one remain alive. 'T were falsity  
To all that has been to count union done

Because death blinds the sight. Such threads are spun  
By dear communion as e'en the dread Three  
Cannot or cut or disentangle. Sea  
From shore the moon may draw ; but two drops run

Together, what may separate? What thought  
Touched but one brain? What pulse-beat, faint or  
high,  
Did not each heart share duly? There is naught

In all we do or dream, from lightest sigh  
To weightiest deed, by which we are not taught  
We live together and together die.



*SONNETS IN SHADOW.*

II.

**Y**ET is the time so long, so long, so long !  
And all the wiles by which we would persuade  
Our hearts to think it short are idly made.  
With leaden feet the bitter-hearted throng

Of moments pass us, each a new, slow wrong.  
We fear no pang that may the life invade,  
But of the lagging days we are afraid,  
And shrink as slaves cringe from the stinging thong.

We did not dream, until grief made us wise,  
Such vasts of time could stretch between day's eve  
And dew-wet morn. Never can joy surmise

How long are sorrow's hours. Clocks deceive  
With formal count that mocks in specious lies :  
Time's measure truly know but those who grieve.



*SONNETS IN SHADOW.*

III.

OF death looks fair before our fevered eyes  
As the rose-garden of the Niblung queen,  
Which glowed so jewel red and white and green ;  
But like the silken twine unto that prize

Sole barrier, a film of doubt denies  
Us entrance. Slender till it scarce is seen,  
It yet is strong as wall of steel between  
Our life which is and what in darkness lies.

Though even hope be lost, there is the chance  
Our loved may live, the thought our loved may know,  
Restrains from desperate self-deliverance.

It is not dread of death or unknown woe,  
But lest they, watching with love's vigilance,  
Should see our deed and be heart-wounded so.





*SONNETS IN SHADOW.*

XXV.

I.

AS some flame-crookèd, venomèd Malay blade  
Writhes snake-like through a dusky woman's side,  
Its film of poison deep within to hide,  
Does sorrow pierce, life's inmost to invade ;

While human comfort would our hearts persuade  
That in the hand of Time doth balm abide.  
Shall time our hearts from the old love divide?  
Vain were a hope could so our faith degrade.

What have we left save féalty alone?  
Shall we to Time this jewel yield, which yet  
Vows of a faith eternal made our own?

The drop most bitter in woe's beaker set  
Is doubt of our soul's firmness : he has known  
Grief's sharpest who has feared he may forget !



*SONNETS IN SHADOW.*

II.

**A**ND yet is Time a mighty angel, strong  
For noble uses, who shall teach the soul  
That bliss is not of life the noblest goal.  
He who, woe-blind, staggers with love along

Like a corpse-bearer, does it cruel wrong,  
And thrusts on his belovèd dead, whose whole  
Desire to bless, the curse to be his dole.  
Love that is true, above the trivial throng

Of hopes and fears, even o'er joy and pain,  
Lifts the soul up to duty's awful height.  
From sorrow's gloomy vales, who loves shall gain

The holy hills, led onward through grief's night  
By love's white star, that steadfast doth remain  
To draw him upward by its heavenly light.



*SONNETS IN SHADOW.*

XXVI.

I.

WHEN souls new-born in darkness of the tomb  
Soar up ethereal unto loftier spheres,  
It scarce can be that earthly hopes and fears  
Cheer them or cumber longer. Though our doom

Keep us intent on shadows in life's gloom,  
To them the light of truth in glory nears.  
That still our souls and theirs may walk as peers,  
That glow immortal must our sight illumine.

Let us no more watch phantoms ; on the fleet,  
Vain shows of life no longer fix our eyes.  
Toward eternal truth be set our feet,

Until to theirs our lofty pathway rise ;  
For spirit-pure companionship be meet,  
And hold our way with theirs along the skies.



*SONNETS IN SHADOW.*

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II.

AS dying Roland to God solemnly,  
At awful Ronceval, lifted his glove  
Crimson with pagan gore, must we, above  
All petty passions, the heart steadfastly

Hold up on high, all bleeding though it be  
From sorrow's wounds. By memory of the love  
Which has been ours, — though hope, like the ark's  
dove,  
Return no more, — all consecrate are we.

The heart which once such love as we have known  
Has touched, forevermore is dedicate  
To holy use ; as when some god has shown,

By portent high, the stone decreed by fate  
To be his shrine. No more it is our own :  
It is an altar where we humble wait.





*SONNETS IN SHADOW.*

XXVII.

I.

WE must be nobler for our dead, be sure,  
Than for the quick. We might their living eyes  
Deceive with gloss of seeming ; but all lies  
Were vain to cheat a prescience spirit-pure.

Our soul's true worth and aim, however poor,  
They see who watch us from some deathless skies  
With glance death-quicken'd. That no sad surprise  
Sting them in seeing, be ours to secure.

Living, our loved ones make us what they dream ;  
Dead, if they see, they know us as we are.  
Henceforward we must be, not merely seem.

Bitterer woe than death it were by far  
To fail their hopes who love us to redeem ;  
Loss were thrice loss that thus their faith should mar.



*SONNETS IN SHADOW.*

II.

**Y**ET if it were not so, nor anywhere  
In all the universe lived on that soul  
Which had for us been all, — while stars still roll  
And the sun shines nor is the world less fair

Though all their use is done, — still were our care  
To be what love believed us. Bliss or dole  
Were naught beside the longings which control  
Heroic hearts. Shut in by grim despair,

Still is there left for them the high emprise,  
The flattery of love to justify.  
Despite the weight of woe forbids to rise,

They strive, brave though forlorn, to soar so high  
Love's honor is unsmirched in all men's eyes,  
Since they make true its most exacting lie.



*SONNETS IN SHADOW.*

XXVIII.

LIFE chooses pain, the sole inheritance  
To all her children doled. What mother so  
A birthright that was evil could bestow?  
Dull savage women brave the worst mischance

To shield their babes ; and brutes will fight the lance  
That threats their cubs, be they however low.  
Against the mother-love all creatures show,  
To count man born of hate were dissonance.

Ah, Mother mystical ! May it then be  
That pain, which seems so terrible a gift,  
Is the best blessing we could take from thee ?

A little might the thought the darkness lift ;  
It were a light by which the way to see  
As when the moon breaks through the storm-cloud's rift.



*SONNETS IN SHADOW.*

XXIX.

OH, egotism of agony ! While we  
    Weep thus sore-stricken, filling earth with moan,  
    The feet of those we love, through ways unknown,  
Brought into lands of living light may be.

E'en our tear-blinded eyes can dimly see  
    What heights are reached by sorrow's paths alone,  
    Where heavenly joy and radiance shall atone  
For gloom and woe have held us utterly ;

And sure our dead, loftier of soul, and now  
    Free from the weakness human sight doth mar,  
Must death with power and vision new endow.

If we, blind, groping, feel the truth afar,  
    They wear its very radiance on their brow.  
Death takes a rush-light, but he gives a star !





*L'ENVOI.*



